



## Oklahoma's Response to COVID-19: Child Care Actions

*Fact Sheet | January 2021*

On March 27, 2020, the CARES Act was signed into law, including \$3.5 billion in supplemental appropriations for the Child Care and Development Block Grant to prevent, prepare for, and respond to the coronavirus. This funding represents a 60% increase in total discretionary appropriations for fiscal year 2020, which amounts to \$9.326 billion. States were given broad flexibility for how to use this funding and have therefore taken a variety of approaches to help address needs of working families and providers through COVID-19. However, as the funds ran out during the ongoing crisis, many states began pulling from other sources to continue supporting parents and providers alike. This fact sheet explains the actions Oklahoma took to support the child care industry and working parents through 2020.

Oklahoma received \$50 million in supplemental CCDBG funds through the CARES Act.

The state primarily used these funds to create a program that offered up to 60 days of child care for families with parents seeking employment. Families did not have to meet typical eligibility requirements for this program, and parents could send their children to any child care provider licensed that accepted subsidies.

The state further deployed the Kith.care program which paid family members \$25 per day, per child, if they cared for the children of frontline workers. The family member had to receive online CPR training and pass a background check to qualify for the program.

On July 30, Gov. Kevin Stitt (R) dedicated \$9.6 million of the state's Coronavirus Relief Fund federal dollars to provide additional child care relief. These funds were automatically distributed as one-time Child Care Quality and Sustainability Payments to the state's more than 2,200 licensed providers—no application was necessary. Funds were disbursed by September 15 and amounts ranged from \$500 to \$10,000 based on provider type and quality rating.

Prior to the pandemic, providers received subsidy payments for up to seven absent days per child, per month. In March, Oklahoma increased the number of paid absent days to 10, and from April through July enhanced the subsidy rate by \$5 per child. As of September, the state had yet to publish changes to these subsidy policies.

Recognizing the heightened need for school-age care this fall, on July 6, the Oklahoma Department of Human Services announced that providers would receive full-time reimbursement rates for school-age children who attend part-time on remote learning days. Additionally, the state announced other funding opportunities available to child care providers including technology grants to aid students in learning remotely.

The state did not announce further financial support for child care or school-age care providers through the fall. At time of publication, the state had yet to announce changes to its subsidy payment policies or plans to assist providers into 2021.